



# United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
Washington, D.C. 20240

MAR 10 2006

To: State Fish and Wildlife Agencies  
Secretary, Department of Natural Resources of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico  
Governor of Guam  
Governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands  
Governor of American Samoa  
Governor of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands  
Mayor of the District of Columbia

On February 22, 2006, the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) Request for Proposals was published in the *Federal Register*. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) would like to share with you supplemental information regarding program improvements and awarding of funds. Specifically, the purpose of this correspondence is to: (1) announce the changes in Tier-2 criteria; (2) clarify what the Service expects in a Tier-1 proposal; and (3) notify you of the intended timeline for proposals.

Earlier this year, through the *Federal Register*, we invited comments from the States and others regarding proposal ranking criteria the Service uses in evaluating Tier-2 grants for LIP. Based on these comments and our experience operating this program for 4 years, we made some changes to the LIP Guidelines for FY 2006 (attached). The guidelines include the LIP National Review Team Ranking Criteria Guidance for Tier-2 Grant Proposals, which should assist you in addressing the ranking criteria. It is our hope that these changes will provide greater clarity to the selection criteria and improve the overall fairness of the approval process.

We intend to award funding to Tier-1 proposals again this year. States must meet the eligibility requirements for Tier-1 grants as presented in the LIP Implementation Guidelines. We have included within the LIP Guidelines (FY 2006), the LIP Tier 1 Eligibility Requirement Expectations that describe the information that must be included in the applications. We suggest you address these six eligibility requirements individually as subheadings within the Approach or Procedures section of the narrative.

This year, the approximate level of funding available for LIP Tier-1 and Tier-2 grants is \$18.9 million. Each State may apply for up to \$180,000 in Tier 1 funding, and up to \$945,000 in combined Tier 1 and Tier 2 funding. If the final FY 2006 funding level is determined to be less than \$18.9 million, States' requests will be reduced in proportion to this reduction to ensure that no State receives more than 5 percent of the total LIP funds available nationwide. Due to the relatively low level of LIP funding this year, it may be necessary to consider partial funding of some proposals. You are encouraged to draft your proposals with this possibility in mind to ensure that viable conservation programs can be conducted if less than full funding is available.

Grant proposals are due April 24, 2006. We will ask the States to submit hard copies of their complete Tier-1 and Tier-2 proposals to their respective Federal Assistance Regional Offices. States will also be asked to submit their Tier-2 proposals in electronic format (Word, WordPerfect, or pdf files) to the Washington Office. The Washington Office will distribute electronic copies of Tier-2 proposals to the LIP National Review Team. The Regional Offices will select Tier-1 proposals for award recommendations. Within 60 days after the proposal submission deadline, the Review Team will meet and select Tier-2 proposals for award recommendations to the Service Director and Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks.

While all States are eligible to submit proposals, we encourage States that did not receive Tier-2 funding during the last cycle or that have never received Tier-2 funding to submit proposals for FY 2006. We request that States that received funding in the past to base their funding requests on their need for and ability to use additional LIP funds in the near term.

We hope this information has been helpful to you. If you have any questions, please contact your Regional Federal Assistance Office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Dale Hall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

DIRECTOR

Enclosure